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## More of Moore



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NIAGARA

After four  
lean years,  
Niagara's  
Beth  
Moore  
drops her  
second  
album  
Five Out  
of Ten Feb.  
28. See  
story on  
page 2.

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# UPFRONT

■ **MUSIC:** Port Colborne native launching new CD: *Five Out of Ten*

## Beth Moore's little miracle

JOHN LAW  
QMI Agency Niagara

Four years have passed since Niagara singer Beth Moore's last album.

She'd like to report they were four happy years, but tunes such as *Get Low* and *End of the World* pretty much sum it up. At her lowest, she was sleeping on towels for three months because she didn't have a mattress.

"Every stage of this album, I remember thinking 'I'm not going to make it,'" she recalls. "I'm going to fall flat on my face. From day one, there was an obstacle. I feel I've been in a video game and every stage has a different lesson."

"I realized the other day I'm at the final stage, facing the Big Boss. And the Big Boss is just me."

Despite her self doubts, Moore's new disc *Five Out of Ten* is a confident-sounding followup to her indie debut album, *The Road*. Part of it was realizing her doubts and anxieties — which led to a year-long bout with writer's block — was sabotaging what she loves most. Once she stopped worrying about success, the songs came back.

"People gauge success by how much money you're making, but that isn't true in the arts," she says. "You cannot gauge your success by how successful you seem."

A former figure skater, Moore knows all about mental toughness. But when she hit her lowest, she wasn't afraid to pray. She needed



DALLAS PHOTOGRAPHY / SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

some sign to continue making music.

The next day her brother showed up with a mattress.

"I didn't ask him for one. Honestly, it was just faith, I think. Things like that happened over and over again with this album."

She had the songs but no money to record them. Ready to give up, she went for coffee with a friend's parents who ended up giving her thou-

sands of dollars to get things back on track. God told them to, they told her.

"They said to me, 'We don't know what your music sounds like, but we feel like you just don't know how to quit. That's a good investment.'"

A year later, another acquaintance fronted her \$5,000. "Out of nowhere. This person had only heard my music once or twice."

Three government grants

also came through when she was expecting nothing. Each victory convinced her the album was a "miracle" determined to happen.

"Something changed me making this album," says Moore, who hails from a musical Port Colborne family. "You don't go through that, see people believe in you that relentlessly, without changing as a person."

"That needed to happen,



THE BIG BOSS

because if I'm going to reach any level of success financially, or even audience-wise, I want to be the type of person who can handle that and keep my character."

The whole process gave her the album title as well. Instead of trying to be perfect with everything, Moore chose to be realistic: "If I'm aware that I'm at five out of 10, maybe I'll make a goal to get to seven out of 10."

### IF YOU GO

**WHO:** Beth Moore  
**WHERE:** Oast House  
Brewers, 2017 Niagara  
Stone Rd., Niagara-on-the-  
Lake

**WHEN:** Saturday, Feb. 28,  
6 p.m.

**ADMISSION:** \$30,  
includes CD. [www.bethmooremusic.com](http://www.bethmooremusic.com)

"Hey man, where I'm at right now's not so bad, so if that's a five, I'll take it."

Moore launches the album with a CD release show at Oast House Brewers Saturday, Feb. 28. It's looking to be her last Niagara show for a while.

"I think it's time to go elsewhere," she says. "It'll always be home, but people always expect you to be around, so the shows can be a little slow."

It promises to be an emotional night — an album she worried would never happen will be in her hands.

"There've been a few times I felt I was face down, but you get used to the pressure," she says. "I just know I wouldn't be happy doing anything else. I'm not sure I'm equipped to do anything else."

"For me, overcoming your obstacles and keeping your joy is probably one of the biggest struggles we have as people."

[john.law@summedia.ca](mailto:john.law@summedia.ca)

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# LOCAL NEWS

## WEATHER

# Partially frozen falls an international sensation

TONY RICCIUTO  
QMI Agency Niagara

It's pretty spectacular. That was a comment from one visitor last week while standing at Table Rock watching the Horseshoe Falls while a crew from CNN in New York City was filming in the background.

In recent days, Niagara Falls has received some unexpected, but welcomed attention, because some beautiful images of the partially frozen falls have appeared in newspapers and on social media sites around the world.

Some of those stories have been exaggerated and have led readers and viewers to believe that it has been so cold Niagara Falls was frozen solid and the water had stopped flowing.

Those of us who live and work in Niagara Falls knew that wasn't true, but some news outlets decided not to let the facts get in the way of a good news story.

And that's why they have decided to visit and check it out for themselves.

As the CNN announcer was getting ready to begin his broadcast, he made it quite clear to the producers back in the studio that there is plenty of ice in the river and around the falls, the water is still flowing over the mighty cascades.

Some visitors appeared quite surprised to see the CNN satellite truck sitting in the parking lot and a few stood near it to take a photo.

"This is a gorgeous place and it doesn't need to be frozen to get the publicity," said Nicholas Pelletier from



TONY RICCIUTO / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA  
Holly Morris and Nicholas Pelletier from Dover, N.H., take some ice photos of Niagara Falls while a television crew from CNN is doing an interview from Table Rock near the brink of the Horseshoe Falls.

Dover, N.H.

"The water is still flowing pretty good, but there is a lot of ice. I think the scenery is just amazing. I have never seen it in the summer time, but definitely plan to be back."

Andy Carpenter, who was visiting with friends and family from the United Kingdom,

said "It's pretty spectacular. There's a lot of ice, but you can see that it's not frozen over."

He spent about half an hour outside looking at the water and taking photos before retreating inside at Table Rock to get warmed up.

"We have had a really good trip. This is a lot colder than what we are used to in

the U.K., but it has been well worth it coming to Niagara Falls," said Carpenter.

Emmanuelle Paul, who is from Belgium and is an exchange student studying at the University of Ottawa, said she has never seen Niagara Falls during the summer, but she certainly liked it partially frozen over.

"It's really magical to see it like this. It's quite different than looking at pictures and we really didn't know what to expect, but there is lots of sun today and it's pretty nice and we are having a really good day."

Niagara Parks Commission chairwoman Janice Thomson said the past few days they

have received many media inquiries regarding the buildup of ice at the falls and that interest has generated visits from several television crews.

The Today Show broadcast their weather report from the brink of the falls and so did the Weather Network.

"It was terrific to hear the feedback from the CNN reporter, who observed that 'everyone should see this wonderful sight', said Thomson. "He commented on how spectacular the images were in the evening as well and that a winter trip to Niagara was an amazing experience."

She noted the commission is pleased with the opportunity to "share these powerful images and experiences with an international audience and to further promote Niagara and Niagara Parks as a year round destination."

Thomson said reporters also expressed interest in the bi-national efforts that have resulted in the management of ice flowing between Lakes Erie and Ontario and have been intrigued by the ice boom solution that was implemented in 1964 to protect the water flow for hydro power generation and to protect built structures along the river.

Thomson said it's quite an experience to see the power of the falls by viewing them from the brink, but there are opportunities to view them from several different locations, including the Journey Behind the Falls or from the comfort of a restaurant table or hotel room overlooking the falls.

tonyricciuto@summedia.ca

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# Time for a closer look at the Niagara Escarpment

**BRIAN BATY**  
 For QMI Agency Niagara

This is a year of significant reviews of provincial policies.

The Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan, the Greenbelt Plan as well as the Growth Strategy Plan are all up for review.

In addition there are plans to review the Metrolinx plan, the wetlands policies and the conservation authority policies.

Having served a two-year term and a current three-year term on the Niagara Escarpment Commission, I am awaiting a decision by May to see if I will remain a member of the NEC. During the past two years we have devoted considerable time to the consideration of possible changes and

improvements to the Niagara Escarpment Plan and to updates which would align the policies and wordings among the various plans under review.

The Niagara Escarpment Commission comprises eight members of the public and eight members of the municipalities in which the escarpment is located, plus a chair. All members are reviewed by a secretary and appointments result from an order in council of the provincial cabinet. Meetings are held monthly at the headquarters in Georgetown, with one-day policy meetings in the spring and fall in the Niagara region and in the near north.

The Niagara Escarpment Plan outlines land use designations, development criteria and related permitted uses, including farming, forestry and mineral extraction. It also provides the framework for a string of 141

Niagara Escarpment parks and open spaces linked by the Bruce Trail, Canada's oldest and longest footpath which stretches 773 kilometres from Queenston Heights to Tobernoway.

The escarpment extends beyond our province through New York state and on the west to Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois.

Designated a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in 1990, the Niagara Escarpment is an internationally recognized landform and is the cornerstone of Ontario's Greenbelt. A landscape of rich biodiversity, home to hundreds of Ontario's species at risk, vital watersheds, agricultural areas and a 450-million-year-old geological history, the Niagara Escarpment is a treasure to protect for future generations of Ontarians.

Unlike municipal boundaries and other boundaries, the escarpment areas are not

identified by straight lines.

First protected in 1985, the escarpment is protected by identified zones. These are the natural areas, the Protected areas, the Rural areas, the mineral extraction areas, the recreation areas and the urban areas. Since first identified, there has been considerable improvements to mapping and on-site inspection and consideration is being given to upgrading the boundaries of the various protected areas based on modern science and mapping tools.

As the spring approaches, why not consider a hike along the Bruce Trail to explore our treasure, the Niagara Escarpment.

Brian Baty is a Pelham regional councillor and a member of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. He can be contacted at [brian.baty@niagararegion.ca](mailto:brian.baty@niagararegion.ca).

## Shipwrecks —Har Gilboa

**SHIP GILLMAN**  
 For QMI Agency Niagara

The general cargo carrier *Har Gilboa* was built at Hamburg, West Germany, in 1957 and scrapped there 19 years later after a fire.

It is quite unusual for a ship to be constructed and dismantled at the same port.

The 156.96-metre-long, 10,323 gross tonne freighter was completed in April 1957 for the Israeli firm of Cargo Ships El Yan Ltd. It was equipped with six cargo holds, strengthened for navigation in ice and able to carry more than 14,900 tonnes of cargo.

*Har Gilboa* came to the Great Lakes about the midpoint of its career heading through the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1968. It was not a regular inland traveller and was sold to Greg interests and renamed *Erinio* in 1972.

The ship was at North Shields, England, undergoing repairs at the famous Swan Hunter shipyard when a fire broke out in the engine room on Dec. 5, 1975. Despite a valiant effort to fight the flames, the blaze did considerable damage and resulted in a decision to sell the vessel for scrap rather than repair it.

It was sold to Eckhardt & Co. and arrived back at Hamburg on Feb. 23, 1976, less than 20 years after it left, and was broken up for recycling.



Har Gilboa is shown in this undated photo.

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■ **MUNICIPAL FINANCE:** Current levy adjustment similar to the price of a 2-4

# Wainfleet tax hike at 2.64%, and climbing?

**GREG FURMINGHER**  
(QMI Agency Niagara)

Wainfleet residents are currently staring at a 2.64% township tax hike this year, but that figure could climb.

Under a draft budget presented to aldermen at a special meeting this month, that hike is similar to the price of a beer.

On a non-lakefront home assessed at a Wainfleet average \$241,330, the hike represents a local tax increase of \$36.70, township treasurer Robyn Madere said last Wednesday.

The projected tax hike reflects a 2015 municipal operating budget of just under \$4.8 million.

Mayor April Jeffs said no changes were made by councilors when the spending envelope was first unveiled.

"There were really no decisions made," she said.

Jeffs said aldermen first wanted to consider possible changes to development charges. Council

last Tuesday night subsequently agreed to place a moratorium on development charges for commercial and industrial properties, not-for-profit projects and residential properties within the townships five hamlets of Wainfleet Village, Ostrykh Corners, Winger, Wellandport and Burnaby until summer 2016.

As a result, and to address Wainfleet's immediate infrastructure needs, Jeffs said there may be a recommendation to hike the tax increase by another percentage point — to 3.65%.

The draft budget presented to aldermen noted a 1% levy increase is equivalent to about \$46,600 being raised by the municipality.

Madere said the 1% "special levy" is a "starting point for discussions."

The budget returns to council during a 5:30 p.m. meeting Tuesday, March 3, at which time it could be approved.

Said Jeffs: "I think it's the best

budget we've had in the past few years."

The operating budget — it covers day-to-day needs — will see costs associated with the mayor and council rise to \$143,900 from \$139,634 last year, while administration costs are pegged to climb to \$875,900, up from \$827,950.

Township chief administrative officer Scott Luey said there is no one reason for the administration increase, but rather various small adjustments being made to a variety of accounts, including for legal fees and tax writeoffs.

The fire services budget, including its separate administration, is set to dip to \$636,522, down from \$637,708 in 2014.

Jeffs said there appears to be no will among council to freeze taxes this year.

"To do a zero — we're under the impression you're going to be catching up later," she said while suggesting the 2.64% hike now is close to a ceiling of four percent increase.

"There's not that stress of 'We've

got to get it down," she said, adding people don't want the municipality to incur debt.

Included in the operating budget are various grants that include: \$1,000 to Women's Place of South Niagara; a total \$1,500 for Port Colborne High School; E. L. Crossley Secondary School and Lakeshore High School scholarships; \$9,000 to Wainfleet Seniors; \$357,490 to the library

board; \$5,795 to Niagara Central Airport; and the third of five \$5,000 installments to the Welland Foundation for a digital stereo mammography unit.

The capital budget, funded by grants and other non-tax revenues, now sits at \$1.12 million and includes \$396,000 for roads and bridges, \$225,000 for a tandem fire truck and \$100,000 for ash tree removal.

■ **MUNICIPAL FINANCE**

## Moratorium has been put on Wainfleet development charges

**GREG FURMINGHER**  
(QMI Agency Niagara)

In hopes of spurring new growth — and ultimately broadening the local tax base — Wainfleet township council has by a narrow margin voted to put a moratorium on development charges until summer 2016.

Growing the tax base is crucial to the rural municipality which has identified a need to spend more than \$13 million over the next 16 years on service delivery, roads and other infrastructure.

Council voted 3-2 last week to waive all new construction charges on industrial and commercial, light industrial and not-for-profit projects until the township's development charges bylaw expires in 2016, Mayor April Jeffs said.

As well, she said, a moratorium will be placed on residential development charges in Wainfleet's five hamlets, which include Wainfleet Village, Burnaby, Ostrykh Corners, Wellandport and Winger. The hamlets have been identified in Wainfleet planning policies as preferred areas for growth.

The moratorium, Jeffs said, will not apply to lakeshore properties.

Leading up to her re-election, Jeffs had said that she would make industrial and commercial growth a priority for this council's term of office.

Through regular visits with existing companies, Jeffs said, she has learned that some have been hesitant to expand because of related development fees.

The township's development charges bylaw approved in 2011 replaces the first time the township has had its own growth-related fees, although reduced Niagara Region development charges have been applicable for years, township chief administrative officer Scott Luey noted.

A report before aldermen had recommended township staff initiate a development charges reduction study to consider reducing residential and non-residential development charges only by up to 50% for the remaining term of the bylaw.

The fees on new construction levied on builders pertain to costs of new or expanded facilities that are required to serve growth.

The report showed Wainfleet's

population is projected to grow from 7,880 by 2031, up from 6,993 estimated for 2016.

Over that 16-year period, an estimated \$1.6 million will have been required to be invested in such things as parks, roads and fire and library services.

Said the report: "Someone has to pay for these expenses. Does the township wish to spread the burden to all taxpayers, or instead have new construction offset some of that cost?"

The report later went on to say: "If (development charges) are not collected, money will need to come from somewhere, either raising taxes or through the issuance of debt."

To that end, when township council revisits its 2015 draft operating budget on Tuesday, March 3, a "special levy" of 1%, representing a mere \$46,600 in terms, could be tacked on to a hike now sitting at 2.64%. Councilors could also consider levying a higher sum.

Wainfleet's development charge reserve fund had \$214,068 as of end of last December.

Luey said the moratorium will go to council for final ratification sometime in March.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## ■ POLICING

# 'Complex calls' in casino area, chief says

RAY SPITERI  
QMI Agency Niagara

Police responded to more calls in the area surrounding the two casinos in Niagara Falls than they did in all of Port Colborne in 2014, Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire says.

QMI Agency Niagara reached out to McGuire to get his reaction to Niagara Falls City Coun. Wayne Thomson's recent comments that an expert consultant should be brought in to study the NRP's casino patrol unit and what it costs Niagara Falls to provide that service.

The unit, established in 1996 after Casino Niagara opened to keep up with growth in the area, responded to 5,542 calls for service last year, McGuire said. By comparison, that's more calls than the entire city of Port Colborne (5,519), while Fort Erie had 9,093 and Grimsby had 9,224.

"There is a complex mix of calls in the area, just as there is across the region," McGuire said.

The area policed by the unit

covers approximately 26 square kilometres.

"The majority of this area is the most densely populated tourist area in the region and presents many unique policing and public-safety challenges," McGuire said. "If, for some reason, the name of the unit ceased to be the casino patrol unit, I would not be relieved of my provincially mandated obligation to provide adequate and effective policing in that geographic area."

"The officers would then come under the command of the Niagara Falls unit, #2 District, and be blended in to the existing complement of officers in order to police the entire geographic area."

Thomson's idea was not delivered formally in a motion or recommendation during a city council meeting last week, but he told QMI Agency Niagara he plans to make a motion at council's next meeting on Feb. 24.

Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. used to pay \$4.3 million for policing costs around Niagara

Falls' two casinos under its previous agreement with the city. It was in addition to the annual flat fee of \$3 million Niagara Falls received for hosting Fallsview Casino and Casino Niagara.

The new agreement with OLG is based on OLG slot and table-game revenue. The city receives about \$20 million per year, but is now responsible for paying policing costs in the tourism area.

The unit's 2014 operating budget was approximately \$4.6 million, which is also its request for 2015, McGuire said.

Thomson said council used to be able to "sit back and smile" when OLG was paying the bill, but it's no longer a laughing matter now that the responsibility has shifted to the city.

"It's never been examined. What are the calls for? What are we paying for? I'm not trying to cause aggravation or stress for the police, but we, as a council, have a responsibility to look at how we are spending taxpayers' money," he said. "We have a responsibility



NIKE DBATISTAS/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA FILE PHOTO  
The Niagara Regional Police's casino patrol unit is responsible for policing the area surrounding the two casinos in Niagara Falls.

ty to examine things and, in this case, make sure the dollars that are being spent are being spent appropriately for casino-related issues."

McGuire said he supports the idea of the unit's budget being rolled into the general NRP budget. He said the NRP made that request last month.

"The police services board passed a motion to make that request to regional council and did so. Regional council defeated the motion," he said.

## CASINO PATROL UNIT

26: Square-kilometre coverage area  
32: Officers  
5,542: Calls for service in 2014  
\$4.6M: Operating budget

Mayor Jim Diodati said the unit is a "very large-ticket item."

"It's a reasonable request that we bring in some kind of expert who can help us sift through it and establish what exactly we are getting for the money," he said, adding he believes council would support taking a close look at the unit.

"The taxpayers expect us to account for the money we spend."

Bob Gale, a Niagara Falls regional councillor and chairman of the Niagara Regional Police Services board, said he will support the wishes of city council.

"I support analyzing anything, if they find [a study is] of value, I will follow up with the chief," he said.

Gale said he has talked to Diodati about the subject.

"Until I get instructions from the mayor and his council, nothing can be done."

Cliff Priest, president of the Niagara Region Police Association, said since the casinos opened there has been an "increase in cause for service" in the surrounding area. That includes intoxicated people, preventing disputes, lost property, motor-vehicle collisions and theft from vehicles.

Continued on next page

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# LOCAL NEWS

## ■ POLICING

## 'Complex calls' in casino area, chief says

From previous page

He said it's important to have a dedicated unit to provide policing in the tourism district or else it would fall on the shoulders of the local district.

"It would take away their ability to police the rest of the city adequately," DeLoach said.

He said he believes the unit provides "very good value for what is charged."

The unit helps tourists, many who don't speak English or are lost, navigate the area and get to where they want to go.

"Our members bring crime prevention and high visibility and the tourists feel safe when they see officers around," Priest said.

McGuire said the city is "well aware" of what the unit does.

Occupying space near the Rainbow Bridge, it has maintained high visibility

on streets, alleys, parking lots and other public places.

He said there are proactive policing programs to deter crimes by encouraging officers to develop a rapport with merchants and develop knowledge of people who frequent the casino district.

McGuire said the unit maintains an "even flow" of vehicular and pedestrian traffic through problem solving and community input.

The officer in charge ensures the unit is staffed with people on foot, bicycles, in cruisers and wearing plain clothes to allow for targeted policing.

The officer in charge works with the Ontario Provincial Police assigned to the casino, casino security and various city departments.

McGuire said the unit has 32 budgeted uniform positions and one civilian position.



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## ■ COUNCIL

### Security, defined access eyed for Augustine Beach

MARYANNE FIRTH  
QMI Agency Niagara

It may be winter, but that didn't stop Wainfleet residents from having local beaches on the brain.

About 50 people packed into the township's council chambers Feb. 14 for a public meeting meant to gather input on ways to enhance the Lake Erie public beach access in the Long Beach area, specifically at the end of Brown Rd.

"We had an excellent turnout despite the lousy weather," township planner Mike Sullivan said in an interview.

While initial enhancement considerations included washrooms, aspects of beautification, a walkway, erosion-prevention initiatives and paid parking at nearby businesses, feedback from residents also expanded the list to include improved security measures and a more defined access to the beach.

Concerns were raised over "unruly

behaviour" at the beach and the need for increased security, Sullivan said.

It was also indicated there was need to better define the access route to the beach, whether that means installation of a gate, fencing or by some other means, he said.

Both short- and long-term solutions will be looked at moving forward.

Sullivan said a report highlighting the some 40 comments from participants at the workshop is being prepared and will be brought forward for discussion at the March 10 council meeting.

Based on public input, "Augustine Beach may not be the best location for these improvements," he said of the enhancements originally proposed.

What changes, if any, occur at the beach will be at council's discretion, he added.

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# 1.92% tax hike

**ROB HOULE**  
QMI Agency Niagara

Meat was flying in Niagara region council chambers last Thursday night as the 2015

budget underwent final deliberations.

There were references to steak, filet mignon, hamburger and rum roast from St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski, who

voted nay on virtually all matters related to the 2015 budget discussed, including the police budget presented by the Niagara Regional Police services board of which he is vice-chair.

Even though the police budget hike came within the 2.79% guidance set by the previous regional council, "that doesn't mean I have to accept what that number is," Petrowski said.

Petrowski blamed the provincial arbitration system that settles wage disputes between the police services board and police officers association for budget pressures that see 93% of the budget, which is going up \$3.7 million in 2015 to \$134.4 million, committed to salaries and benefits.

While acknowledging there wasn't much fat to cut from the remaining 7% dedicated to operations, Petrowski said he would not support the police budget of the new police board, which includes Coun. Bob Gale of Niagara Falls and Coun. David Barrick of Port Colborne, "inherited" from the previous one that included then regional chair Gary Burroughs of Niagara-on-the-Lake, then-mayor of Port Colborne Vance Badawo and Thorold Coun. Henry D'Angela of Thorold, who chaired the board.

"I don't support the budget because I don't support the guidance," Petrowski said. "Our guidance is way too luxurious ... we can't afford to run guidance that is four times the amount that my father gets on his CPP cheque."

D'Angela took Petrowski to task for blaming the former police services board for a budget he does not agree with.

"I found it a little confusing when I heard the board vice-chair say the board had no other option but to receive (the budget)," D'Angela said. "They set the rules, they manage the meetings, they could have discussed this at their board meetings and come back with a different number or returned it back to the chief. They were appointed back in December, here we are almost at the end of February. I find it a little ironic the board doesn't really want to support this, yet they took no action to change it. If the board doesn't like this they should have done something about it as opposed to now squawking in the council chamber."

The police budget easily passed, with Petrowski and fellow St. Catharines Coun. Bruce Timms being the only two voting against it.

Petrowski wasn't done, later railing against the region's overall operating budget, which actually came in under the 2% guidance set by the previous council.

Speaking to the proposed budget, Petrowski, who had previously asked permission from Chair Alan Caslin to sit as he spoke since he is recovering from a leg ailment, said he would stand this time "because my anger over this budget will keep me standing."

While Petrowski spoke and voted against the region's budget, Barrick, chair of the budget review committee, praised it, noting it came in under guid-

ance with a 1.92% hike on the region's portion of property taxes. For the average homeowner with a house assessed at 236,134, it will mean a tax hike of \$27.50.

In a prepared speech to council, Barrick noted some of the highlights of the budget.

"The 2015 operating budget maintains all current programs and services," he said.

"And provides funding for new and enhanced services that will encourage economic prosperity, including:

"Investing in better transit - Advancing advocacy and planning for GO Transit in Niagara, including a mobility hub study that will look at potential GO transit stations in St. Catharines, Grimsby, Niagara Falls and Beamsville; \$2.7 million to advance inter-municipal transit in Niagara, including new transit routes to connect GO transit stops along the QEW

"Supporting critical social services and front-line emergency services to enable a workforce-ready labour force - \$1.7 million to fund a range of employment supports and activities that will enable vulnerable residents to achieve independence through sustainable employment; Ongoing funding to ensure the availability of high-quality, subsidized child-care options for working parents; Increased investments in frontline staff to support emergency medical and community services to enable a healthy and strong Niagara.

"Implementing a strategic economic development plan, in partnership with the 12 local area municipalities, businesses, Niagara College and Brock University - \$2.3 million in funding to support economic development initiatives, including Niagara's Economic Action Plan that will support business growth and job creation; \$2.2 million to fund tax grants and financial incentives for new and existing industrial and commercial businesses.

"Regional council approved the 2015 rate supported budget on Jan. 15. Residents will see a combined 0.84% increase in the water and wastewater programs and a 0.66% increase in waste management services.

"These annual impacts are approximate and will vary municipality to municipality.

"Regional council also approved a capital budget of \$155.7 million to support significant infrastructure projects, including the Central Avenue Bridge replacement, and upgrades to the Welland Wastewater Treatment Plant and Port Colborne Water Treatment Plant."

In total, taxpayers will be billed \$321.9 million to fund Niagara Region operations.

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## ■ CROPS

# Fruit growers wait to assess cold's damage

DON FRASER  
QMI Agency Niagara

February's deep freeze has taken a toll on Niagara grapevines and especially tender fruit. But to what extent isn't known just yet.

"We are anticipating to see some significant damage in grapes and in tree fruit across the peninsula," said Ryan Brewster, field services manager for Niagara-based Ker Crop Management Services.

"On the tender fruit side, I am expecting almost complete wipeout (areas) on the west end for peaches, apricots and plums."

Brewster and others caution that fruit vine and tree samples are being collected but the extent of the damage is too early to assess.

"Really, a lot of this now is speculation," Brewster said. "But the east end of the peninsula doesn't look to be quite as affected as the west end."

Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc and Syrah are examples of sensitive varieties more susceptible to a seasonal bud kill or even plant-trunk damage.

Brewster also said that with vines, there are three buds within a single bud.

While the main analysis is on the main bud, "we don't really know the extent of the damage to those secondary buds, either, at this point."

In last year's deep-freeze, those secondary buds generally thrived and resulted in a decent crop.

"But now we've seen back-to-back

seasons like this, we're concerned about the longevity of the vines," Brewster said.

Meanwhile, a VineAlert program is helping mitigate the damage.

The program measures the cold hardness of grapevines and warns growers when to turn on their frost-fighting wind machines that circulate warmer air from above.

Brewster said Sunday night's cold snap produced a "very limited inversion" where warmer air could be pulled down by the machines.

Monday night's conditions were a little better.

Grape Growers of Ontario CEO Debbie Zimmerman cautioned while early signs are somewhat troubling, it is still too soon to judge.

"We came off a really good year last year (despite the cold)," she said. "So I would ... say it is just too early yet to react."

Zimmerman said even though a half crop was expected last year, "in some cases ... the crop was 80% survival."

Heavy snow has formed a bit of an insulating blanket, Zimmerman added.

"We do intensive bud counts ... it takes some time to collect the information and analyze it."

"We'll wait for the next round of reports."

Fred DiProffo, of Pondview Estate Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake, also noted eastern vineyards appear to have fared better.

"It's very site-specific," DiProffo said. "Our primary site is looking quite

good. So in the east end, we luckily haven't experienced the very cold temperatures other areas have."

"We're in good shape here."

As for peach crops, Phil Tregunno, chair of the Ontario Tender Fruit Producers Market-

ing Board, said not too many surviving buds are needed.

"But we definitely need some, and we're not through all the cold weather yet," said Tregunno, who is also a Niagara grower.

As for the west end, "it's a lit-

tle early to say it's a complete wipeout or anything like that. "But for sure, with these temperatures there's going to be damage."

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **MOVIES:** Cineplex offering sensory-friendly screenings at select theatres

## Reel treat for people with autism

**GREG FURMINGER**  
QMI Agency Niagara

Special screenings of the latest Hollywood blockbusters could be coming soon to nearby theatres, for people liv-

ing with autism spectrum disorder.

Cineplex Entertainment is planning "sensory-friendly screenings" — 2-D projection, increased auditorium lighting, lower volume and smaller

crowds — at select theatres across Canada during off-peak times.

Cineplex spokeswoman Pat Marshall said the program will start as a pilot at select theatres, the closest was a Valentine's Day showing of *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water* in Mississauga and Waterloo.

"Before we roll it out broadly across the country, we want to make sure we get it right," she said.

If it is a success, it will roll out in Niagara, Marshall said.

Autism Ontario Niagara chapter manager Fran Chesney hopes it is embraced.

"This is something we're very pleased to see Cineplex offer," she said.

"We're very excited about this. We look forward to promoting it with our families."

But until sensory-friendly screenings come to Cineplex Odeon Seaway Mall in Welland, or to the big screen at Niagara Square in Niagara Falls, Autism Ontario will continue to hold its own movie events.

On a Sunday in December, for Niagara and Hamilton residents, it hosted a showing of *The Penguins of Madagascar* at Landmark Cinemas Pen Centre in St. Catharines for \$5 per



GREG FURMINGER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Niagara's Cineplex Odeon theatres, such as this one at Seaway Mall in Welland, as a result of a new partnership between the company and Autism Speaks Canada. The pilot project launched on Valentine's Day across the country.

family.

Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by varying degrees of communication difficulties, social and behavioural challenges and repetitive behaviours.

An estimated one in 68 children is on the autism spectrum — a 30% increase since 2012.

The Cineplex program has been developed with research and advocacy organization Autism Speaks Canada.

"We congratulate Cineplex for its awareness of the unique needs of the ASD community and for providing families an opportunity to enjoy a movie together in an especially wel-

coming environment," said Autism Speaks executive director Jill Farber.

Films that will run on select Saturdays at 10:30 a.m., about every four to six weeks apart, will be announced with booking information on Cineplex.com.

A nearby calm zone for families who want a break from the movie will be offered during the special screenings. Also, to accommodate dietary restrictions families will be able to bring their own food.

Children's admission prices will apply to all family members.

Marshall said the theatre company's initiative stems

from general interaction with its customers.

"They asked if we'd do something like this, and we said we'd love to."

That type of interaction similarly led Cineplex to launch its Stars and Strollers program more than a decade ago. For that, two new movies are offered each week — including at Niagara Square — with a baby-friendly environment that features lowered volume and dimmed lighting, a change table and at select theatres, stroller parking.

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QMI Agency Niagara

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A sister station to Welland-based 91.7 Giant FM, Country 89 promises to play today's best country music among the likes of Taylor Swift, Florida Georgia Line, Tim Hicks and Miranda Lambert. "(The) launch represents the culmination of several years work in bringing a local country station back to Niagara," said Pat St. John, president of RB Communications.

"Country music is enjoying a tremendous resurgence in popularity and we are excited about bringing back a radio format that local listeners have asked

for and will truly enjoy."

The on-air lineup includes Rob Leclerc and Janel Steeper on mornings, Stephanie Mizzi will host Country Mid-Days and the afternoon drive show with Marc Lefebvre and Katie Pansolin. Eryk Trickett rounds out the on-air complement weekday evenings and weekends.

Live streaming can be found on the station's website at Country89.com.

It was learned last July that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission awarded RB Communications its second FM licence. It then had been expected to be on air last fall.

Before changing its format in 2005, Giant FM was known as Spirit 91.7 and provided Niagarans with their favourite country hits.



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■ **GARY BORDEN:** St. Catharines musician has rhythm in his blood

# Van Gogh descendant has ear for rock, art

**CHERYL CLOCK**  
(QMI Agency Niagara)

There's a typed letter on offi-

cial Ozzy Osbourne letterhead, framed and hanging on his base-

It was the mid-1990s when St. Catharines musician and guitarist Gary Borden was study-



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U9 2006/2007 Greg Eaton grandceaton@sympatico.ca

U10 2005 TBA rockymadds@hotmail.com

U12 2003/2004 Tammi Fretz 905-835-6798 tfretz@sympatico.ca

U13 2002 TBA rockymadds@hotmail.com

U15 2000/2001 Jason Ruston 905-353-4930 jruston@bell.net

18 yrs and over (Womens Rec.) Cindy Forshey cindyforshey@gmail.com

at a private music school in the U.S. He got wind that the godfather of all that is heavy and metal was looking for a new guitarist. So Gary sent him a cassette tape demo of his guitar solos and band work, along with a resume.

And waited.

The reply letter came in the mail. Succinct, courteous, dated June 30, 1984 and very un-Ozzy-like, it reads in part: "Right now I think I've found the musicians I want to work with. If for some reason it doesn't work out, I have your name and phone number on file."

God bless

So OK, Ozzy never did call. But it's not like the 47-year-old Borden has been waiting idle by the phone, either.

The guy who has played with Canadiana the likes of Sass Jordan and local bassist Darly Gray of Helix has just finished playing lead and rhythm guitar on an album alongside Larry Gowan.

On the home front, Borden is singer and guitarist in the rock band Blood of VanGogh. He co-wrote and produced the band's self-titled, debut album in 2013. And this month, Borden released his first instrumental album, *Chasing a Dream*, a project that's a little bit country and a little bit rock 'n' roll.

Gary is also the guy who designed the carpet in the Niagara IceDogs dressing room.

And in the midst of all this, he discovered something about his heritage that might explain his need for creativity in life. Seems he's related to the post-impressionist Dutch, one-eared painter Vincent van Gogh. Think *Starry Night* and *Sunflowers*.

Gary's aunt, while researching the family's genealogy, made the discovery.

Borden grew up in Dryden in northern Ontario and was born into music. His dad played accordion, his mom accordion and organ. And when Gary was 11, the family cut its first vinyl recording — mom, dad, Gary on drums and older brother Roger on guitar and sax.

The playlist was eclectic. Think Tennessee Waltz, Spanish Eyes, It's Still Rock and Roll to Me and Theme from Star Wars, united in musical diversity on a record they called *Good Times*. The Borden.

His first break came when he was working at a music store in Dryden.

He found an ad in *Guitar Player* magazine for a contest sponsored by Irie Clifton, American guitar company Fender, and the Musicians Institute in California.

He sent off a demo, and told no one except his brother.

When Fender called him out of the blue, Gary assumed it was his brother playing a prank, and uttered an unfortunate obscenity.

It wasn't his brother. Turns out, Gary had won second place internationally, and a vintage reissue Stratocaster guitar.

"That kinda made it reality, that I was good enough," he says.

His brother, Roger, was his biggest fan whose encouragement fueled his confidence he needed to enrol in the Musicians Institute. Roger died in 1988, and Gary dedicates the song, *Alone*, on *Blood of VanGogh* to his brother.

Gary moved to St. Catharines after he graduated, and over the years he's played alongside Darly Gray, bass player with Helix, together in the classic rock cover

## ROCK ON

To learn more about Gary Borden and Blood of VanGogh, visit his website at [bloodofvangogh.com](http://bloodofvangogh.com)

band Scurvy Dogz. He played guitar and vocals on Helix's 1998 album, *half-ALIVE*. And four years ago, he landed in a Hercules aircraft with Sass Jordan and joined her on a visit to a Canadian military base in Alert, Nunavut.

Last year, he landed a recording gig with Gowan, whose solo career includes his like *Strange Animal* and *A Criminal Mind* and who has worked full-time for the past decade or so as lead singer with Styx. The album will be released later this year.

And those privy to the IceDogs dressing room will find some of his artwork on the floor.

Gary, who installs carpets for A-1 Flooring in St. Catharines, created the image of IceDogs mascot Bones, hockey stick in hand, using pieces of plush carpet.

He cut each piece by hand, then seamed it all together. The five-foot circular carpet was then inset into the rubber flooring in the dressing room.

As for the van Gogh heritage, he's exploring that, too. Not long ago, he bought some acrylics, brushes and a canvas and painted his own version of a *Starry Night*, with a town of amplifiers instead of houses, and guitars in the forefront instead of the cypress tree silhouette.

Painting, art, music — it's all about creating.

"It's just in me," he says. "It's like a disease."

"I channel life through it."

[cheryl.clock@sympatico.ca](http://cheryl.clock@sympatico.ca)



CHERYL CLOCK / (QMI AGENCY NIAGARA)

Gary Borden, 42, is a guitarist in local band Blood of Van Gogh, and just finished recording an album with Larry Gowan to be released this year.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Sunnier days lie ahead



GREG FURBERGER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

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■ DR. ROBIN WILLIAMS

## Former Niagara top doc receives Order of Canada

Niagara Region's former medical officer of health has been appointed to the Order of Canada.

Dr. Robin Williams was named a recipient of the Order of Canada last year by Gov. Gen. David Johnston "for her contributions as a public health leader promoting effective policies in early childhood development."

The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident received her investiture into the Order of Canada at a ceremony in Ottawa this month.

The Order of Canada was created in

1967 to recognize outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation.

Since its creation, more than 6,000 people from all sectors of society have been invested into the order.

Williams, a former Niagara Falls pediatrician, now serves as acting chief medical officer of health for Ontario.

As a member of a provincial government panel in the 1990s, she helped bring about the creation of Early Years Centres across Ontario and improved benefits for longer parental leave for new parents.

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 Fast Food Restaurant \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Best Shopping Continued**

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 Optical Store \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Pharmacy \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Tires \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Appliance Repair \_\_\_\_\_  
 Auto Body Shop \_\_\_\_\_  
 Auto Glass Repair \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Bank/Credit Union \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Car Wash \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Best Services Continued**

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**Contest Rules:**

Only original newspaper ballots accepted. No mechanical reproductions allowed. Employees of the InPort News, and their immediate families are not eligible. Winners of the Gift Card will be determined by a random draw from all entries received by 4 p.m. Friday, March 13, 2015. Winners will be contacted by phone. You do not have to fully complete ballot to win.

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■ **WOMEN'S PLACE:** Novel fundraiser to be set up in Niagara Square

## Book Riot on the move

**TONY RICCIUTO**  
QMI Agency Niagara

The ever-popular Nova House Book Riot is moving to Niagara Square this year.

"We are going to have a store front with about 10,000 square feet, which is bigger than what we had at the Optimist Club," said Ruthann Brown, executive director of Women's Place of South Niagara.

This will be the 38th annual Book Riot and it will take place from May 7 to 10. The past two years the book sale was held at Niagara Falls Sportsplex on Simkins Ave. Before that it was held at the Optimist Club on Morrison St.

Parking and accessibility issues were two of the main reasons for the move.

"We are going to be next to SportChek. There will be plenty of parking, there will be easy accessibility and we will have a store with all the space we will need," said Brown.

What triggered the conversation with Niagara Square is that Rib Fest, which was also based at the Optimist Club for many years, moved the event to the square when it was looking for a new location.

"We need to be in a spot where we can attract the traffic. We had that when we were at the Optimist Club at the corner of Dorchester Rd. and Morrison St., because that's a busy shopping area. Now at Niagara Square and with the development of Lowe's and the Walmart plaza that has become a busy area," said Brown.

The book riot is the organization's biggest fundraiser. In the past it has usually raised \$40,000 to \$50,000. Its best year ever

brought in \$65,000.

"It's important for us to be able to raise those kinds of dollars so that we can provide our services," said Brown. "There are a lot of people in our community who love to read books, and they can get to be expensive, and with our economic climate they just can't afford them so we are providing a service. And it's good recycling."

Donations are always welcome and they can be made year round. Items such as used books, games, puzzles, DVDs, video games and music, both CDs and vinyl, can be dropped off during business hours at Sentinella Self Storage at 4655 Kent Ave.

Due to space limitations, magazines, encyclopedias, textbooks, VHS tapes, cassettes and Reader's Digest condensed books can't be accepted.

Brown said volunteers are always needed because donations are dropped off year round and the items need to be sorted. Because the fundraiser runs for a number of days lots of people are needed to set up the thousands of books and restock the tables during the sale.

Anyone who is interested in volunteering should contact the community engagement manager at 905-356-3933, ext. 238.

Women's Place of South Niagara began as two sister organizations, one in Niagara Falls and the other in Welland. Nova House in Niagara Falls and Senery Place in Welland joined forces in 1997.

In 2013-14, the two shelters provided a safe haven for 209 women and 150 children. The organization also provided legal services to 356 clients through its outreach services.



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# LOCAL NEWS



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### ■ EDUCATION: District School board of Niagara hosting annual competitions



**GREG FURMINGER/QUI AGENCY NIAGARA**  
E.L. Crossley Secondary School student Chris Rusin works on a four-stroke engine rebuild during the automotive skills challenges hosted by District School Board of Niagara at Seaway Mall.

## Students up to the skills challenge

**GREG FURMINGER**  
QUI Agency Niagara

As minutes ticked away, Jon Lennox kept his cool while taking automotive engine measurements in the middle of a bustling shopping centre.

"It's pretty nerve wracking," he said.

"It's all fun, but I want to do good."

The Grade 11 student at Welland's Eastdale Secondary School was among dozens of Niagara teens taking part in the public school board's annual skills challenges last week.

"It's a really good experience, it gets you interested," said Lennox, who aspires to become a diesel mechanic. "I hope to come back and do this next year."

Students mostly from grades 11 and 12 were put through a battery of tests at Seaway Mall, where they performed diagnostics, measurements, small engine repairs and rebuilds.

While that was going on, another field of students working in teams of two were shooting and editing promotional videos for the annual challenges.

District School Board of Niagara challenges are being held throughout the region this month and into March, including at the Market Square in St. Catharines and, coming up, at Niagara College.

All the technologies offered in area high schools are being showcased, said John Sherk, the board's skills programs co-ordinator.

"It's a hands-on experience and from my point of view, they get to see what other schools are doing and work under pressure."

He likened the challenges — which also include culinary arts, hairdressing and construction trades — to sports competitions.

"They get a little nervous," Sherk said of the students, adding they do take home

with them a heightened level of self-confidence.

Gold medalists move on to the Ontario Technological Skills competition and from there, winners advance to the national championships in Saskatoon.

Sherk said it's not unrealistic for students to expect offers of apprenticeships at higher-level competition.

Last week, challenge participants were mentored by Niagara College students, who also served as judges for the event.

But they, too, picked up a little something.

"I'm definitely learning," said Chris Smith. "There's a lot of little things that you pick up on."

Now in his second of three years of post-secondary study toward a career as a mechanic, Smith said he didn't have the opportunity to participate in skills challenges at his high school.

"It's really interesting to see the skills they're teaching today," he said, as he ensured competitors under his watchful eye not only completed tasks properly but were using the right tools for the job.

"They're doing really well," he said.

"These kids definitely have a lot of patience, and that's good to see."

Eden High School Grade 11 students Brent Copland and Carter Vahrmeyer were among participant teams filming the event.

While Copland doesn't plan to pursue TV and video production as a profession, his partner does.

"I just really like filming," said Vahrmeyer.

"It's just good to look at something and know I created that."

For details on numerous remaining competition dates and locations, visit

<http://techdbsbn.org/skills>

greg.furminger@summa.ca  
Twitter: @Greg4TheTribe

# LOCAL NEWS

## EDUCATION: Off The Wall



MICHAEL YANG / SPECIAL TO QM AGENCY NIAGARA

A young admirer looks over some of the student artwork displayed at the District School Board of Niagara office on Carlton St.

## Student artists showcased by DSBN

**MICHAEL YANG**  
For QM Agency Niagara

The portrait is hauntingly beautiful, drawn apparently with the sharp precision and keen eye of a seasoned professional.

It is also Grade 9 student Julia Bains' first attempt at drawing a monochrome photo.

"I thought it would be really cool to try it after seeing the pictures online, and I'm really, really happy with how it turned out," she said. "It took me about one to two hours for the initial outline, and the shading took about six to eight hours over the course of a few days."

Her drawing, along with more than 130 similarly beautiful paintings, sketches, sculptures and other multimedia pieces, now lines

the walls and atrium of District School Board of Niagara's Education Centre in St. Catharines as part of the board's 10th annual Off The Wall exhibit.

It features artwork from students in grades 9 to 11 across the 17 high schools in Niagara.

"It's really a celebration of the diverse pieces that students in the earlier secondary school years have been able to accomplish," said Jerome Black, DSBN's consultant for the arts.

"When we talk about being 'off the wall,' we talk about being creative, unique and having ingenuity, and that is something that is reflected in this exhibit," he said. "The talent and ability we have in the area is amazing."

This year's exhibit

involves the efforts of 10 curators, art teachers from various schools and a number of volunteers to help with logistics and layout. Easels and equipment were brought from Laura Secord Secondary School.

"It is a really great experience and I am definitely going to be back next year, even if my piece does not get selected," said Bains. "The art and talent here are too good to miss out on."

The exhibit is open to the public and will be on display at the 191 Carlton St. centre until March 18.



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## DAYTIME TV

# Ripa and Strahan hint at Niagara Falls visit

JOHN LAW  
QMI Agency Niagara

Jimmy Fallon may not visit, but it appears Kelly Ripa and Michael Strahan are making plans for Niagara Falls.

Last Thursday, the morning talk-show hosts were discussing Niagara Falls when they mentioned the possibility of bringing production back to the city. The show, with different hosts, has shot live and taped episodes in Niagara Falls in 1996 and 2006.

Mayor Jim Diodati immediately tweeted out to the show: 'Are you ready to come and see us again?'

The show responded:

"We'd love to! In the summer when we're done taping out, lol. We miss you, Niagara Falls."

Since then, Diodati said he has been "quietly feeling things out behind the scenes" for a possible summer visit.

"We both want it to happen," he said.

*Live With Kelly & Michael* executive producer Michael Gelman did not return a message from QMI Agency.

In 1996, Gelman helped co-ordinate the show's visit to Niagara Falls with then hosts Regis Philbin and Kathie Lee Gifford. Two episodes were filmed in September at Oakes Gar-

den Theatre — one live, one taped — with guests including Kevin Spacey, Jann Arden, Jeff Daniels and Anne Murray.

Ten years later, the show returned to Oakes Garden Theatre on a chilly May morning. Once again doing one episode live and another taped, Philbin was joined by new co-host Ripa. Guests included Denzelle and Mary Lynn Rajskub (Chloe from 24).

Each show was packed with fans who won their tickets through a local draw.

At the time, Gelman said taking the show on the road was "probably about 20 times more work and more

expense than staying in the studio."

The show films Monday to Friday mornings in New York.

It cost the city, casinos, Niagara Parks Commission and other partners about \$700,000 to entice the show here in 2006. The city's share, about \$150,000, came from a one-time grant from Ontario Power Generation.

john.law@summedia.ca

JOSEPH MARZULLO/WENN.COM

Morning talk show hosts Kelly Ripa and Michael Strahan hinted at a possible Niagara Falls visit on Thursday's show.



Prices in effect until March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, while quantities last.

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **CELEBRATION:** Night to highlight wines this Friday

## Cuvée to feature more than 50 wineries

**BOBMYCZYNSKY**  
QMI Agency Niagara

The 2015 Cuvée tasting gala is set to kick off a weekend to celebrate Niagara's wines.

A large number of Ontario wineries will come together Friday for the event at Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort in Niagara Falls.

"We're featuring over 50 wineries, each winemaker is selecting his or her favourite wine," said Bob Tarnat from the cool climate oenology and viticulture institute at Brock University.

"We've got 13 culinary partners. Not only the great chefs from the Niagara Fallsview Casino and Niagara College Canadian Food and Wine Institute, but we're featuring winery restaurants from

the area plus three GTA restaurants with their signature dishes."

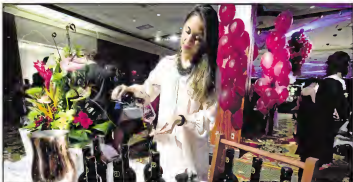
Tarnat is excited that Brock has taken over the organizational role of Cuvée.

"Brock and Cuvée, it was a natural fit for us," she said. Proceeds from the event will help support the industry that Cuvée showcases, for student bursaries and research to benefit the industry.

In the past, Cuvée was more of an industry event with awards presented. But in recent years, organizers have made changes to allow consumers to enjoy the event, too.

"It's more about a grand tasting — one winemaker one favourite wine, what will it be," said Tarnat.

"You're walking into the room, you know every single



Ludmila Soutani of Pelee Island Winery pours a glass at Cuvée in this 2013 file photo.

wine in the room is something that the winemaker is really proud of.

"The general consumer, they know not only are they going to get VQA but they're going

to get a top quality and exciting varietal or wine to try. It's also an opportunity to meet

the winemaker and have a discussion one-on-one."

She added: "It's not just about standing for four or five hours tasting wine and eating fabulous food!"

After the grand tasting, there will be an après with sparkling wine, icewine bars, local craft breweries and dancing with the band Mosaic Rocks.

"It truly is a celebration of excellence in Ontario winemaking," said Tarnat.

Tickets are still available but there is an event cap of 700.

For people just looking to sample some wine, Cuvée en Route passes are available. Passes allow the public to sample special Cuvée tasting flights at wineries across Niagara.

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